

Nothing could make the true Republican intent more clear than an analysis of their approach to Medicare reform. If they had been concerned about protecting the health options of the elderly, they would have pursued comprehensive health care reform. The Republican agenda has nothing to do with protecting Medicare, or with balancing the budget. It has to do with making good on campaign promises to corporations. It has to do with eliminating, on every conceivable front, our social obligation to invest in our people. It has to do with vitiating the very meaning of this democracy. It has to do with tearing at the fabric of our social institutions so that those at the bottom of heap, who can least fend for themselves—our children, our elderly, our poor—have no chance of improving the quality of their lives. It is about redistributing the resources of our country to those that already have plenty so that they can get more.

H.R. 2425 is a bad bill. It does not address the broader issue of health care reform; it places unnecessary burdens on the elderly and the poor; it devastates medical training facilities, and is mainly a financial vehicle to balance the budget while reducing taxes for the affluent. We can do better for the elderly, we can do better for our future as a democratic society. I urge my colleagues to consider who we are to be become as a people before they vote on this measure, because it is that question that this bill puts to the test.

CONGRATULATIONS TO THE GOVERNMENT OF PANAMA

HON. BILL RICHARDSON

OF NEW MEXICO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, October 30, 1995

Mr. RICHARDSON. Mr. Speaker, I had the privilege of meeting President Ernesto Perez Balladares of Panama for the first time last week. The occasion was a meeting hosted by Enrique Iglesias, president of the IDB, at which many senior level representatives of the U.S. Government agencies that closely follow the affairs of our two countries were present, as well as senior officials from the international financial institutions.

The feeling around the table was unanimous that the structural economic achievements obtained by President Perez Balladares' administration, after only 1 year in office, were considerable, particularly in terms of modernizing and opening up Panama's economy to private domestic and foreign investment.

These include modern legislation to streamline and level the playing field in terms of tax regulations and incentives; considerable flexibilization of heretofore rigid labor laws, and increased participation by the private sector in the key areas of telecommunications, energy, water supply, and ports. Increased investment in these areas are crucial for the successful implementation of the Panama Canal Treaties to which our two governments are fully committed.

Indeed, we heard as well from the Under Secretary of the Army, who is also Chairman of the Panama Canal Commission, a very positive report regarding the growing participation of Panamanians in the management and operation of the canal. I also took note of ongoing major capital investment projects de-

signed to guarantee the future of the canal, in particular the widening of the Culebra Cut. It is fully financed from increases in revenues from canal operations that have taken place made over the last few years.

By treaty rights, Mr. Speaker, these revenues belong to Panama, and could have easily been used by the Panamanian Government for other much needed investments in social and economic development projects; instead, they have been allocated in a conscious and, in my view, responsible decision by the Perez Balladares administration, to maintain and improve the viability of the canal well into the next century.

I wish to share with my colleagues my personal congratulations to the Government of Panama, and particularly to its President, Mr. Ernesto Perez Balladares, for its courageous and decided leadership in the hemisphere; particularly on such difficult issues as the war on drugs; for I also note from very recent media and intelligence reports of continuing and large seizures by his government of shipments of illicit substances destined for our shores. These actions and other strong measures to control and prevent money laundering, I might add, are being carried out in full cooperation with U.S. Government agencies and those of other governments.

I am confident that the United States and Panama will continue to strengthen their relations as we enter delicate exploratory talks on some sort of presence of our military in the Isthmus after the year 2000. I took the opportunity to tell the distinguished President of Panama that I support such a presence, Mr. Speaker, and that the Congress will do its part to support any efforts to strengthen the ties that bind our two nations.

BUDGET CONFEREES SHOULD SUPPORT THE HOUSE-PASSED 2-YEAR EXTENSION OF JET FUEL EXEMPTION

HON. SAM JOHNSON

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, October 30, 1995

Mr. SAM JOHNSON of Texas. Mr. Speaker, over the past 5 years our airlines have posted losses of over \$13 billion. This has caused almost one-half of those to file for chapter 11 bankruptcy with three of them closing their doors completely. Because of these financial setbacks and heavy Government mandates, over 120,000 U.S. jobs have been lost.

Therefore, I believe that budget reconciliation conferees should support the House-passed measure that extends for 2 years the exemption of the aviation jet fuel tax. This new tax was supported by the Democrats and the Clinton administration and passed as part of the Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act of 1993. I believe that this new tax will further burden the airline industry by imposing an additional \$500 million in new taxes in addition to the \$6.5 billion in excise taxes they already pay. To deny this extension could prove detrimental to the future of our airline industry when for the first time in 5 years they are showing slight improvements.

That is why it is so important that our budget conferees support the House-passed jet fuel extension that would give the airlines 2

years, not 17 months, to get back on the road to prosperity. The airlines are already facing a huge tax burden that affects their ability to operate and increases, by a substantial amount, the cost of traveling for all passengers. By delaying this tax, and eventually its repeal, we will help the airlines recover from a disastrous 5 years of losses, create more jobs, and decrease the travel cost for their passengers. I hope that my colleagues and the budget conferees will support the House position and eventually push for full repeal of this devastating tax.

THE WHITE HOUSE CONFERENCE ON TRAVEL AND TOURISM

HON. VICTOR O. FRAZER

OF THE VIRGIN ISLANDS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, October 30, 1995

Mr. FRAZER. Mr. Speaker, today I would like to welcome the 1,700 delegates attending the White House Conference on Travel and Tourism to Washington, DC. It is with great price and honor that I also welcome Mrs. Angela Belfon, co-owner of World Wide Travel of St. Thomas, a small business person, as my delegate to the conference.

Small businesses represent the largest creator of jobs in the Nation. The travel and tourism industry is a major employer in the Virgin Islands, consisting primarily of small businesses. This vital segment of our economy must be supported.

Government can play a major role by fostering a partnership with the private sector. This partnership recognizes the importance of the industry as well as the Government's role in monitoring and promoting the travel and tourism industry.

The White House Conference on Travel and Tourism is a good example of how Government and businesses can work together to build a stronger economy.

TRIBUTE TO GENE YODER

HON. TIM ROEMER

OF INDIANA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, October 30, 1995

Mr. ROEMER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay special tribute to Mr. Gene Yoder of Goshen, Indiana. Gene is retiring this year as Chairman of the American Association of Homes and Services for the Aging, a position he has held since 1993.

No one has done more to care for older Americans in northern Indiana than Gene Yoder. For the past 25 years, Gene has served as President and CEO of Greencroft, Inc., a campus of senior housing and long-term care services in Goshen.

Greencroft has provided high quality housing and health care to hundreds of senior citizens over the years. In addition to his work at Greencroft, Gene has touched the lives of thousands of older Americans who reside in more than 5,000 long-term care facilities around the country which he has represented as AAHSA's leader.

Most recently, Gene led an AAHSA delegation which met privately with President Clinton